

MMWR Weekly COVID Digest for the week of June 22

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Hello, I'm Charlotte Kent, Editor in Chief of the CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report.

This week the MMWR released four articles that provide new understanding and insight into COVID-19.

On June 22, MMWR published an article about One on the Potential Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Use of Emergency Departments in the United States

Previous research had revealed that National syndromic surveillance data suggested a decline in emergency department visits during the COVID-19 pandemic. With this new article, researchers observed in the 10 weeks after declaration of the COVID-19 national emergency, emergency department visits declined 23% for heart attack, 20% for stroke, and 10% for hyperglycemic crisis related to uncontrolled Diabetes. These findings suggest that public health and health care professionals should reinforce the importance of timely care for acute health conditions and assure the public that emergency departments are implementing infection prevention and control guidelines to ensure the safety of patients and health care personnel. The sooner emergency care begins, the better are the chances for survival.

On June 24, MMWR released an article looking at a COVID-19 Outbreak Among College Students After a Spring Break Trip to Mexico

Built on previous findings that COVID-19 can cause asymptomatic and mild illness, particularly among young, healthy populations, this article discusses research findings showing transmission of SARS-CoV-2 during and after a college spring break trip in mid-March. This outbreak led to 64 cases. Prompt public health investigation, with effective contact tracing and cooperation between a university and a public health department, contributed to outbreak control. What these findings show is that a coordinated response with contact tracing and testing of all contacts, including those who are asymptomatic, is important in controlling future COVID-19 outbreaks that might occur as schools and universities consider reopening.

On June 26, MMWR published 2 important articles on COVID-19 research.

We published an article looking at characteristics Associated with Hospitalization Among Patients with COVID-19 based on data from Metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia during March–April 2020. The authors built on previous findings that hospitalized COVID-19 patients are more commonly older, male, of black race, and have underlying conditions. Less is known about factors increasing risk for hospitalization. Their research found that older age, black race, male sex, diabetes, smoking, obesity, and lack of insurance were independently associated with hospitalization. What are the implications of the findings for public health practice? In order to reduce severe outcomes from COVID-19, measures to protect people from infection such as staying at home, social distancing, and awareness and management of underlying conditions should be emphasized for those at highest risk for hospitalization with COVID-19. Potential barriers to the ability to adhere to these measures need to be addressed.

Another article in the June 26 issue, looked at the relationship between laboratory confirmed SARS CoV-2 infection among women of Reproductive Age by their Pregnancy Status. These findings greatly expanded on the limited information available about COVID-19 in U.S. pregnant women. The authors noted that Hispanic and non-Hispanic black pregnant women appear to be disproportionately affected by COVID-19 during pregnancy. Among reproductive-age women with COVID-19, pregnancy was associated with hospitalization and increased risk for intensive care unit admission, and receipt of mechanical ventilation, but not with death. A vital public health implication of these findings is that to reduce severe COVID-19, pregnant women should be aware of their potential risk for severe outcomes from COVID-19. Specific actions pregnant women can take include not skipping prenatal care appointments, limiting interactions with other people as much as possible, taking precautions to prevent getting COVID-19 when interacting with others, and talking to their health care provider about how to stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To keep up to date on CDC research published in the MMWR on COVID – 19, go to cdc.gov/mmwr and subscribe for free. You can also subscribe to this podcast and offer your comments.

“Stay safe and stay well”

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